

The boy Samuel ministered before the LORD under Eli. In those days the word of the LORD was rare; there were not many visions.

² **One night Eli, whose eyes were becoming so weak that he could barely see, was lying down in his usual place. ³ The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down in the temple of the LORD, where the ark of God was. ⁴ Then the LORD called Samuel.**

Samuel answered, “Here I am.” ⁵ And he ran to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”

But Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.” So he went and lay down.

⁶ **Again the LORD called, “Samuel!” And Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”**

“My son,” Eli said, “I did not call; go back and lie down.”

⁷ **Now Samuel did not yet know the LORD: The word of the LORD had not yet been revealed to him.**

⁸ **The LORD called Samuel a third time, and Samuel got up and went to Eli and said, “Here I am; you called me.”**

Then Eli realized that the LORD was calling the boy. ⁹ So Eli told Samuel, “Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, ‘Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.’” So Samuel went and lay down in his place.

¹⁰ **The LORD came and stood there, calling as at the other times, “Samuel! Samuel!”**

Then Samuel said, “Speak, for your servant is listening.” (NIV 84)

Theme: Listen, your Lord is Calling You.

You are sitting down in your favorite spot watching T.V. Maybe it's a football game, a Nascar race, your favorite show, a reality contest, a good movie—whatever it might be. And someone is talking to you. It's your wife, or husband, or parents. You're trying to watch T.V. You are trying to concentrate on what is happening. But there are too many distractions. Before you know it you missed a big play or a big turning point in the plot, or the judges' scores. If you have DVR you can pause or rewind it, but if you don't—then you are out of luck.

At times, this may happen with God's Word. You are sitting down trying to concentrate on God's Word, whether its reading your Bible at home, when you are Bible Study, or trying to listen to a sermon, and your mind gets sidetracked. There are a lot of things running through your head, so when God is trying to talk to you—your mind gets sidetracked. You start out listening and paying attention, but something is said and soon your mind is elsewhere. You hear but you do not listen or pay attention. Soon you've gone through the devotion, or the Bible Class is over, or the Pastor says, “Amen” and you can't for the life of you remember what it was about. Or how many times does it happen when we get home from Church and we can't even remember what the lessons were about? You had good intentions, but you got distracted by something and you missed out.

Samuel's Mom, Hannah, prayed to the Lord for him. She promised the Lord that if were to bless her with a child, a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord. So when Samuel was weaned Hannah took him to the tabernacle to work and live serving the Lord under the High Priest Eli. Samuel grew up and was given more jobs to do in God's house. But Eli grew older and weaker and was losing his sight. No doubt he often called to young Samuel for help.

One night when Samuel was sleeping he heard someone call him, “Samuel, Samuel.” So Samuel got up and ran to Eli, **Here I am, you called me.** Eli responded, **I did not call, go back and lie down.** Three times this happened. Three times Samuel went elsewhere when the Lord called him.

Samuel made a mistake, sure; but it is understandable. The Lord didn't come and talk to too many people at that point in time. He had never talked to Samuel in a vision before; Samuel did not recognize his voice. And yet three times when the Lord called he ran to someone else.

Sort of like us. We go running elsewhere when the Lord calls us. He calls to us through his gospel. He speaks to us his Word. We can hear his Word by reading the Bible or a devotional book, by attending Bible Class, or listening to a sermon. But we get distracted by the things of this world. We go running elsewhere.

He calls to us, **Cast all your anxiety on him because he cares for you.** But instead when we go through hard times, we self medicate or

seek solace in other people. He encourages us, **Grow in the grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.** We grow in the knowledge of a lot of things throughout our lives—knowledge of our favorite team or athlete, details on our favorite actor or musician, or perhaps knowledge on how to do something; but we often don't spend much time growing in the knowledge of God's Word. He says, **Let us not stop meeting together as some are in the habit of doing.** Instead we find ourselves at work, or sleeping in, or at our children's activities.

Instead of listening to the Lord, we seek answers from the shallow and empty thoughts and philosophies of this world. We look for solutions to our problems from friends, or science, or the ways of the world. The Lord calls to us through his Word, but time and time again we run after the things of this world.

Three times the Lord called Samuel and three times Samuel ran to Eli. Finally, after the third time Eli figured it out. He hadn't call Samuel, but the Lord was. He said, **Go and lie down, and if he calls you, say, 'Speak, LORD, for your servant is listening.'** And that is exactly what Samuel did. He went back to his bed. And again, for the fourth time God called—he came down and stood by him and said, **Samuel, Samuel!** And he knew it was the Lord who had come to him in a vision so he relied, **Speak, for your servant is listening.**

In Samuel's day the Word of the Lord was rare, that is one of the reasons why Samuel ran to Eli—he didn't understand that the Lord was calling him. But the Word of the Lord is no longer rare. We don't have to wait for the Lord to appear to us in a vision to hear his Word or to know his will. All of that has been written down for us.

Everything the Lord wants us to know is readily available for us in his Holy Word. We can access it at any time. We can read it at home as we crack open a Bible, look it up online or on our phones, we can even listen to it if we desire. At any time at any place we have the opportunity to hear the very words of God—an opportunity that people throughout the centuries couldn't enjoy.

The Lord uses this Word to call us. It is through the Word that he calls to us and brings us to faith. Paul makes that point in our second lesson. **God chose you to be saved through the sanctifying work of the Spirit and through belief in the truth. He called you to this**

through our gospel, that you might share in the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ. Through the gospel found in his Word the Holy Spirit calls us to faith in him. So that through that faith we would receive the eternal life won for us by Christ.

Because it is through the Word that the Lord reveals himself. He reveals himself as the Savior of the entire world. Without his Word we wouldn't know much about him—especially his love and grace. So he reveals himself to us as a loving and forgiving God as he said to Moses, **The LORD, the LORD, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin.** He does not hold our sins against us. He doesn't treat us as our sins deserve. Instead he treated his Son, Jesus, as our sins deserve. That is because Jesus held our sins against himself as he became guilty of them on the cross.

He tells us in his Word, **We all, like sheep, have gone astray, each of us has turned to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all.** And, **God made him who had no sin to be sin for us, so that in him we might become the righteousness of God.** Jesus paid the price for our sins on the cross. He suffered through their eternal punishment and he gave us his perfect life and obedience. So that we are credited as righteous through faith in him.

He also tells us, **I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die.** Not only did Jesus remove our sins from us but he also gives us the gift of eternal life. Christ's resurrection from the dead is a guarantee that we will rise from the dead. We know that through faith in him we will live with him in heaven forever.

So on the pages of Scripture God reveals himself to us the Savior of the entire world. And on those same pages he calls to us and brings us to faith. Through his Word he makes us part of his family so that we could receive our eternal inheritance. That is the good news of the gospel. And that good news we can't find anywhere else—not in the philosophies of this world, in no amount of science or knowledge, and you won't find it at the bottom of the bottle. It is found only in his Word.

So what do we do? We say, "Speak, O Lord! Your Servant is listening." Speak, O Lord. Not that we are expecting a special

revelation from God. No, he speaks to us in his Word. So when we say speak O Lord, we can be saying, get in to the Word. Help us to read, study, and treasure your Word so that we are may grow in grace and in the knowledge of you and your love. Because we want to know all we can. We want to know all we can about the Lord—who he is and what he has done to save us. We are never satisfied with the limited knowledge of his Word that we do have—there is always more that we can know, there are always things that are good to be reminded of.

So the Lord speaks to us, and notice who is listening, **Your Servant is listening.** We are the Lord's servants. We exist to serve him and do his bidding. And so we want to know more about how we can serve him. We want to know more of his will for us and we can live our lives in a way that is pleasing to him. Motivated by his sacrificial love for us we are moved to show love to him by obeying his commands. So we search his Word daily—not just to see his love, but to see how we can rightfully show our thanks and appreciation for all he has done for us.

You're trying to watch T.V. But your spouse is talking to you, your kids are being loud, the dog is barking, and the phone is ringing. You are getting pulled in so many directions that either you can't pay attention to what you are watching, or you walk away from it all together. There are many things that vie for our attention each and every day. And sadly they cause us to miss God and his Word. But it is through the Word that the Lord call us to be his own and reveals himself to us. So join in with young Samuel, **Speak, O Lord, for your servant is listening.** Amen.